

# News Release



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## **MSHA levies \$336,000 fine against Darby Mine No. 1 operator** *Operator charged with six contributory violations for fatal accident*

**ARLINGTON, Va.** – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) today announced that it has fined the operator of the Darby Mine No. 1, where five miners perished following a mine explosion on May 20, 2006, \$336,000 for six safety and health violations contributing to the accident.

“Violations of mandatory mine safety laws led to the fatal accident taking the lives of five miners at the Darby Mine,” said Richard E. Stickler, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “We at MSHA extend our thoughts and prayers to the families for their losses, and we thank them for their patience as we worked to complete our investigation.”

An explosion at the Darby Mine No. 1 occurred around 1 a.m. in a sealed area of the mine. MSHA investigators determined that the explosion occurred when a mine official, who was accompanied by one miner, cut metal straps extending through seals with an acetylene torch, igniting explosive levels of methane that accumulated in the sealed area. The two miners located near the seals died immediately, and three miners trying to evacuate the mine after the explosion died from carbon monoxide poisoning. One miner was rescued while escaping from the mine.

MSHA’s investigation team determined that the accident occurred because the operator did not observe basic mine safety practices and because critical safety standards were violated. Mine management failed to ensure that proper seal construction procedures were utilized in the building of the seals behind which the explosion occurred. Mine management also failed to ensure that safe work procedures were used while employees attempted to make corrections to an improperly constructed seal. Furthermore, mine management failed to adequately train miners in escapeway routes. Finally, mine management failed to adequately train miners in the proper use of self-contained self-rescuers.

MSHA’s investigation report is online at [www.msha.gov](http://www.msha.gov).

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